

Friday February 26, 2010

Good Morning,

My name is Kevin Brace and I am the Chairperson of the Correctional Staff Health and Safety Sub-Committee. I am a Correctional Officer at Northern Correctional with over 15 years of service.

I am here today to testify about HB- 5404 ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONDISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN INFORMATION REGARDING DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION EMPLOYEES TO INMATES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.***

The Correctional Staff Health and Safety Sub-Committee strongly urges passage of this bill. Our Sub-Committee was established last year to look at issues that directly impact the safety of Correctional Staff. Inmates having access to Staff's personnel file is currently the single greatest threat to Staff safety faced by all Connecticut Department of Correction Staff.

Inmates are using the Freedom of Information Act to harass and intimidate Correctional Staff. By gaining access to Staff files inmates would have access to home addresses, emergency contact information, spouse and children's name and contact information. This information could be used to intimidate Staff and keep them from doing their job. Inmates at Northern using FOI have gained a list of Staff's first, last, and middle names. Most inmates do not have to pay for access to FOI, they can continue to make request after request. It is our fear that inmates will now be writing municipalities in an informational fishing expedition to place liens on Staff's property, requesting property tax bills (that contain vehicle information, Spouse's names and home addresses). Inmates or co-conspirators could show up at Staff residences to commit crimes against Staff and their families.

We are trained as Cadets in the Correctional Academy to never share any personal information with the inmates. Allowing inmates access to Staff's personnel files is not only dangerous to Staff, but to our families. In order to keep the public safe, we as Correctional Staff need to be able to do our jobs without fear of being retaliated against by the inmate population and making our families a target.